

NOVELTY FORMS: A SATIRE

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*Editor's Note: Late in the last century, forms (solid crossword arrays with various geometrical outlines) were frequently found in puzzle columns in magazines and newspapers. Constructors soon tired of standard outlines such as squares, diamonds and pyramids, and developed a variety of more exotic ones: stars, crosses, pentagons, enneagons, hourglasses and the like. Two hundred and nine different shapes (including minor variants) can, in fact, be found in the 1906 Key to Puzzledom, a guide to the best in word puzzle literature up to that time. Alas, every excess creates its own reaction; the following satire is an abridgement of an article published by 'Amaranth' in the *Enigma* in April, 1924.*

Once there was a Formist who had Everything and then Some. What he didn't know about Forms simply wasn't. He could turn Out Diamonds by the Carload. He could Square anything. When it came to building Pyramids he could give Cards and Spades to any of the Pharaohs. He could build a Fifteen Diamond with one Hand and shake a Cocktail with the other. In fact, he was the real Raz-ma-taz. He won all the prizes for Forms - and kept Them!

At last his Honors palled upon Him. Like Alexander, he sighed for more Words to conquer. In an evil hour he built a Hexagon; then a Hexdecagon; then a Dodecagon. From them the Transition was easy to Enneagons and Icosahedrons. From the moment he completed a Slab-sided Parallelepipedon he was a doomed Man. His wife pleaded with Him; his Friends reasoned with Him; the Editor of *The Enigma* flatly refused to print a Demented Hourglass and two Inverted Bedsteads. All to no avail. The virus was in his veins and he was on the Down Grade. He started a Puzzle Paper of his Own, which he called "The Emancipator," and he filled it with Depressed Cuspidors, Oblique Hatracks, and Flop-eared Fire-plugs. His slogan was "Get out of the Rut and into the Rot." And he did. His name became a By-word.

The day "The Emancipator" blossomed forth with a Reversed Sawhorse and two Compound Salt-Shakers his despairing Wife consulted the Family Physician. Nothing could be done. They sent him to a Home for Mild Cases. Some of his former friends went to see Him last week. They took one look and sadly Tiptoed out of the Room. He was trying to build a Truncated Waffle-iron! There is no Hope.